

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07 OC-05 CCO-00 SY-05 OPR-02

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3944

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON PRIORITY

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0342

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MOPS ET

SUBJECT: MILITARY OFFENSIVE IMMINENT IN ERITREA

1. SUMMARY: ON APRIL 27, DURING VISIT TO 2ND DIVISION HQ AT EPMG-
OCCUPIED PORTION KAGNEW TRACT ECHO, OIC NAVCOMMUNIT OBSERVED
OBVIOUS PREPARATIONS FOR EPMG MILITARY OPERATION. THESE PREPARATIONS
COMBINED WITH RECENT ARRIVAL BY AIR OF AMMUNITION AND OTHER MIL-
ITARY SUPPLIES, CLEARLY INDICATES THAT OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS
ARE IN OFFING. THESE PREPARATIONS ALSO COINCIDE WITH LAST WEEK'S
SUMMONING OF FOREIGN MISSIONARIES FROM RURAL AREAS OF ERITREA
AND ARRIVAL OF LARGE NUMBERS MEDICAL PERSONNEL.

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2. OIC NAVCOMMUNIT, WHO HAS FREQUENT AND RELATIVELY FREE ACCESS

TO EPMG-OCCUPIED PORTION OF KAGNEW TRACT ECHO WHICH HOUSES HQ OF 2ND DIVISION AND AUXILLIARY UNIT, VISITED HQ ON APRIL 27, HE OBSERVED SEVERAL RADIO VANS BEING PREPARED FOR SERVICE, SMALL AUXILLIARY GENERATORS BEING INSTALLED OUTSIDE HQ AND NUMBER OF TECHNICAL PERSONNEL WORKING ON RADIO EQUIPMENT. HE ALSO REPORTED THAT ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS WERE BEING LOADED WITH AMMUNITION AND TROOPS WERE SEEN CLEANING WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT. THERE WERE NUMBERS OF NEW TROOPS IN AREA OF HQ WHICH HE HAD NOT SEEN BEFORE, AND HE WAS MOMENTARILY DENIED ACCESS TO HQ BUILDING BY NEW GUARDS. HE REPORTED THAT THIS ACTIVITY EXCEEDED ANY PREPARATION WHICH HE HAS EVER OBSERVED IN HIS 10 MONTHS IN ASMARA.

3. THESE PREPARATIONS OCCUR AT TIME WHEN INCREASED AIR ACTIVITY HAS BEEN NOTED AT BOTH MILITARY AND CIVIL AIRPORT. SEVERAL REPORTS CLAIM THAT UP TO 10 MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PLANELOADS OF EQUIPMENT ARRIVED DURING WEEK OF APRIL 19. CRATES OF AMMUNITION WAS REPORTED AMONG CARGOES OFF-LOADED. EQUALLY THERE HAVE BEEN MORE FREQUENT THAN NORMAL NUMBER OF FIGHTER SORTIES OBSERVED FROM MILITARY AIRPORT, AND F5ES ARE REPORTEDLY NOW OPERATING IN ERITREA. NUMBER OF EAF PILOTS IN ASMARA ALSO SAID TO HAVE INCREASED.

4. ALL THIS MILITARY ACTIVITY COINCIDES WITH SUMMONS BY EPMG MILITARY AUTHORITIES FOR ALL FOREIGN MISSIONARIES TO REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO ASMARA FROM RURAL ERITREA. ULTIMATE MOTIVE BEHIND SUMMONS IS STILL UNCLEAR. DURING WEEK OF APRIL 19, "SEVERAL HUNDRED" MEDICAL PERSONNEL ARRIVED IN ASMARA. SOME REPORTS INDICATE THEY WILL BE SENT INTO RURAL AREAS TO REPLACE NURSES AND DRESSERS WHO HAVE DESERTED TO INSURGENTS, YET IT IS KNOWN THAT BULK REMAIN IN ASMARA. FURTHER, CONVOY FROM SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA CONSISTING OF AT LEAST 300 TRUCKS ARRIVED IN ASMARA EVENING OF APRIL 27, THUS SECURING TO BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN POPULATION ADEQUATE FOOD SUPPLY FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.

5. TIMING AND OBJECTIVE OF APPARENT OFFENSIVE ARE OPEN TO SPECULATION AT THIS POINT. TIMING WILL PROBABLY HINGE ON COMPLETION OF PREPARATIONS AND WEATHER. FORMER APPEAR TO BE ALMOST COMPLETE, BUT WEATHER MAY PROVE DECISIVE FACTOR. HEAVY RAINS DURING DAY AND EVENING APRIL 27, MAY BE FOLLOWED BY 10 DAYS TO TWO WEEKS OF DAILY THUNDERSHOWERS WHICH TRADITIONALLY PRECEED BY MONTH OR MORE ACTUAL RAINY SEASON IN LATE JUNE. MOST LIKELY OBJECTIVE WOULD

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APPEAR TO BE AREA SOUTHEAST OF ASMARA TOWARD DECAMERE, AND PERHAPS AS FAR AS ADI CAIEH, AS THIS AREA IS KNOWN TO HARBOR CONCENTRATIONS OF INSURGENTS. FURTHER, IN MARCH, EFFORTS TO OBTAIN SILICONE SAND FOR ASMARA GLASS FACTORY WERE THWARTED AND EPMG FORCES SUFFERED EMBARRASSING SETBACK. ONE POSSIBLE INDICATOR OF AREA OF OPERATION IS ESTIMATE BY OIC NAVCOMMUNIT, AN EXPERIENCED COMMUNICATOR, THAT RADIOS BEING PREPARED FOR OPERATION HAVE RANGE OF APPROXIMATELY 50 MILES FROM OBVIOUS OPERATIONAL COMMAND POST

AT 2ND DIVISION HQ.
WAUCHOPE

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